BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

translation by

DANA LEWIS and TOREN SMITH

lettering and retouch by

TOMOKO SAITO

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MANJI
Immortal rōnin

RIN
Last heir of the Mutenichi-*ryū dojō* destroyed by Itō-*ryū*

SORI
A ninja who was Rin's father's closest friend. He supposedly gave up his sword for the arts.

MAGATSU
Former Itō-*ryu* swordsman

SHIRA
Terrifyingly sadistic Akagi assassin

THE STORY SO FAR

Infected by *kessenchu*, mystical bloodworms which can heal all wounds and grant their host immortality, Manji's bloodthirst led to the capture and murder of his sister. To atone for the 100 good people who died at his hand under his corrupted lord, Manji vowed to slay 1,000 evil men in exchange for the release of death.

Two years earlier, when her parents were murdered on her fourteenth birthday by Anotsu Kagehisa's Itō *ryū* swordsmen, Rin Asano became part of a mad revenge cycle which began when Anotsu's grandfather was thrown out of the Asano clan's Mutenichi *ryu dojō* fifty years before.

A quest for vengeance was instilled in Anotsu, a similar quest now haunts Rin. Upon learning of Manji, she enlisted his aid to destroy the Itō-*ryu* and avenge her parents.

Last issue...

Manji and Magatsu reunited through coincidence and the wisdom of Master Sori, are traveling together as Manji makes his way to find Rin in Kaga. Magatsu figures he'll get a chance to avenge the death of his girlfriend, killed by the vicious Shira, and he's right. Shira's been hunting Manji to get his own brand of revenge, and so we continue as the fray is just beginning.

designer DEBRA BAILEY assistant editor MICHAEL CARRIGLITTO editor TIM ERVIN-GORE publisher MIKE RICHARDSON

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無限の住人

FALL FROST

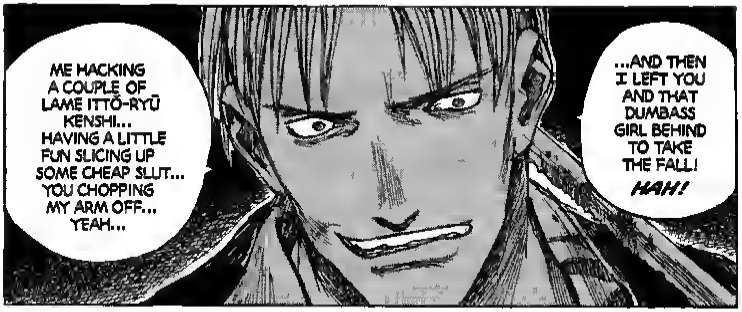
– part two –

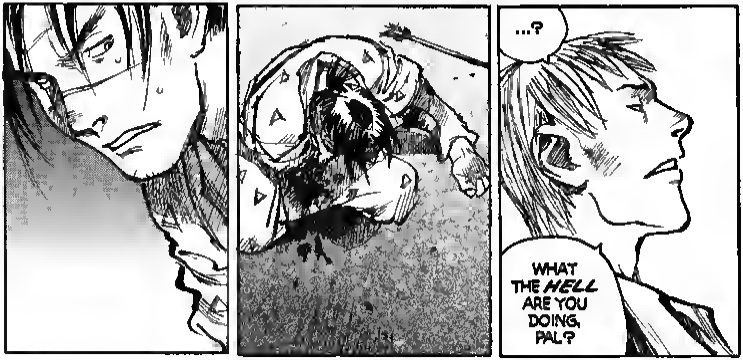
GAH HAH HAH HAH!
YOU SURE KEPT ME WAITING, MANJI OLD BUDDY! DAMN!

AW, SHIT... MY FRIGGIN' ARM AGAIN?
NOT AGAIN!
BWA HAHAHA HAHA!

HEY, SORRY 'BOUT THAT, MANJI. HERE IT'S OUR BIG REUNION, ALL THAT CRAP... AND WHAM!
LOOK WHAT HAPPENS.
RRNGG...

STILL, WE GOT A LOT OF BAD SHIT BETWEEN US, RIGHT?
ME AND YOU.


ME HACKING A COUPLE OF LAME ITTŌ-RYŪ KENSHI... HAVING A LITTLE FUN SLICING UP SOME CHEAP SLUT... YOU CHOPPING MY ARM OFF... YEAH...
...AND THEN I LEFT YOU AND THAT DUMBASS GIRL BEHIND TO TAKE THE FALL! HAH!


...?
WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING, PAL?

OH! OH, YEAH! I GET IT! YEAH!
IT WAS LIKE THAT FOR ME, TOO. FEELS LIKE YOU CAN STICK IT RIGHT BACK ON, LONG AS IT'S WARM.

WELL, IT DON'T WORK, SHIT FOR BRAINS. YOU'RE NOT A DAMN CRAB!
CRABS CAN DO THAT...?
'COURSE, WE'RE A STONE'S THROW FROM UENOHARA. TAKE IT WITH YOU, FIND A DOC.
MAYBE YOU'D BE AS GOOD AS NEW.
BUT IT AIN'T GONNA HAPPEN!
UH, GUYS. GUYS...?
LOOKS LIKE IT'S SORTA, OVER, RIGHT?
AND OUR JOB, TOO. SO, LIKE... UH...
SHH!!

.....
.....

Y'KNOW, DUDE...
I GOT THIS FEELING... I'VE *SEEN* YOU BEFORE THAT UGLY *MASK* THING.

BUT TODAY'S THE FIRST TIME WE'VE *MET*.
YEAH. MAYBE.

LISTEN, YOU WHITE-HAIRED *FREAK*.
IS IT? SO WHO GIVES A SHIT? PISS OFF!

DID YOU HIRE THOSE DICKHEADS UP THERE?
YEAH. MAYBE.
HOW MUCH DID YOU PAY 'EM?
TWENTY-FOUR RYŌ. EIGHT EACH.
BUT I ONLY PAID HALF UP FRONT. SO? WHAT'S IT TO YOU?
JUST CHECKING. WELL, YOU BETTER GO PAY 'EM OFF.
I'LL WAIT. NO PROB.

BECAUSE IN A FEW MINUTES, YOU'RE GONNA BE *DEAD*.
AND DEAD MEN DON'T NEED MONEY... RIGHT?
WHAT THE F--?! WHAT'S WITH *YOU*, DUDE?
YOU *STUPID* OR SOMETHIN'?

LOOK... I GOT SOME SERIOUS BUSINESS WITH THAT SCAR-FACED GUY SQUIRMING AROUND OVER THERE. FIGHT SOME DAMN KID I NEVER MET BEFORE...? FORGET IT!
CLIMB THE HILL AND GO PLAY WITH THOSE THREE MONKEYS UP IN THE TREES.
HEY, MANJI!
IF THIS JERK'S REALLY A *FRIEND* OF YOURS, TALK SOME SENSE INTO HIM. HE'S TOTALLY *WACKO*, MAN. I--
.....
.....
HEH, HEH...

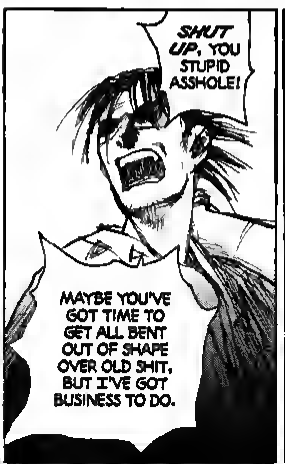
EVERYTHING WAS GOING PRETTY MUCH ACCORDING TO PLAN FOR YOU. AND NOW...
HEH HEH HEH...
CHECK IT OUT--- NEVER BEEN BETTER.
YOU *TALK* TOO MUCH.
DON'T YA, SHIRA...?
HO-LEE *SHIT!!* B-BUT IT WAS... WASN'T IT?

WHAT THE... WAIT A SEC...
WHAT *IS* THIS SHIT?
SORRY, PAL.
JUST THE WAY I *AM*, Y'KNOW? GUESS I "FORGOT" TO MENTION IT WHEN WE WERE TEAMED UP.
THEN...
HEH HEH
LEMME GET THIS STRAIGHT--
--I CAN HACK OFF YOUR *ARMS*, GOUGE OUT YOUR EYES, SLIT YOUR GUTS OPEN...
...AND I CAN STILL KEEP YOU *ALIVE*?! AS LONG AS I *WANT*?!
NOW DO YOU GET IT, MAGATSU?
THAT'S WHAT HE'S *LIKE*.
YEAH. THEN... IT'S HIM *FOR SURE*.
HE'S THE SCUM WHO KILLED REN!

RIGHT, THEN.
HE'S ALL YOURS. HAVE FUN!
YEAH... THANKS.

?!
HEY...?!

HEY, MANJI!
WHAT IS THIS CRAP? WHERE ARE YOU GOING?!


SHUT UP, YOU STUPID ASSHOLE!
MAYBE YOU'VE GOT TIME TO GET ALL BENT OUT OF SHAPE OVER OLD SHIT, BUT I'VE GOT BUSINESS TO DO.

THIS HERE'S MY MAN, MAGATSU TAITO.
HEIGHT, WEIGHT, STRENGTH... ALL THE SAME AS ME.

YOU AND ME... SOME OTHER DAY.
OKAY?

WHY YOU... SON OF A... I AMBUSHED YOU, MAN! CUT OFF YOUR GOD DAMN ARM!
AND YOU... ....

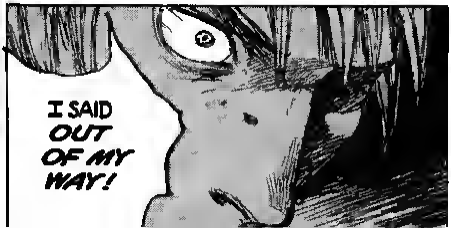
YOU DON'T EVEN GIVE A SHIT?!

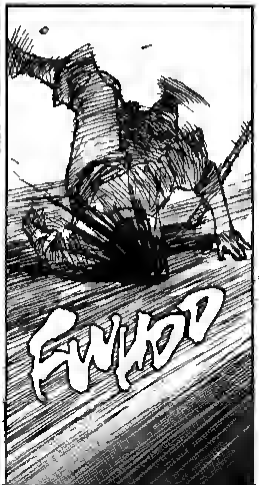
SORRY, PAL!
YOU'RE FIGHT-ING... ME!

GET OUT OF MY WAY!

KING
HEH.
DIE,
YOU--

NGHK!


I SAID
OUT
OF MY
WAY!


FWOOD

.....
GNNG.
MAGATSU, PAL...
...WERE YOU *REALLY* ITTO-RYU?
SH... SHUDDUP.
I THOUGHT HE WAS... *ONE-HANDED.* L-LEFT MYSELF OPEN.
WON'T MAKE... THE SAME MISTAKE... TWICE.
NOT A DAGGER... MAYBE A SPEAR...?
THE HIT FELT... *WEIRD,* THOUGH.
.....
NO.
BOTH GUESSES *WRONG,* MAGATSU.
NOT A DAGGER OR A SPEAR...

FURUTT

SPIT
.....
.....
MANJI!
YOU WANT TO PUT SOMEONE ELSE UP AGAINST ME, THAT'S YOUR BUSINESS.
HOLY SHIT...
.....
THOSE ARE HIS...

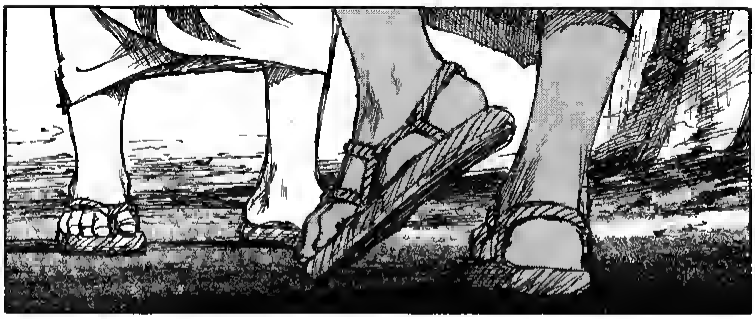
BUT THAT HAND OF MINE...? I DIDN'T LOSE IT TO SOME HALF-ASSED PUNK LIKE THAT KID.
SO DON'T BREAK MY HEART, MAN. FIGHT!
YEAH, OKAY. FAIR ENOUGH.
HEY!

BESIDES, NOW YOU GOT ME INTEREST-ED...
...SHIRA, OLD BUDDY.

SO THAT'S WHAT TURNED YOUR HAIR WHITE, HUH? MUST'VE REALLY FELT... INTEREST-ING.
CARVING ALL THAT MEAT RIGHT OFF YOUR BONES...
YEAH... DON'T KNOW HOW MANY TIMES I BLACKED OUT, MAN. AND EVERY TIME MY EYES OPENED AGAIN, I ASK'ED MYSELF--
--"WHY THE HELL AM I DOING THIS...?" GOOD QUESTION, HUH?
BUT, MANJI... THE MOMENT I SAW YOUR FACE, ALL THOSE DOUBTS, ALL THAT PAIN...
...GONE... LIKE THE MORNING DEW.
AND ANOTHER THING--
--WHEN I ACTUALLY USE IT... GUESS WHAT'?

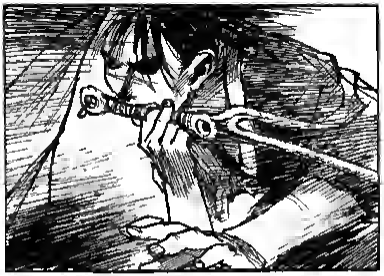
FUCKIN' HURTS LIKE *HELL*, MAN!
HURTS *ME!* ME!
I THOUGHT IT'D GO NUMB AFTER A WHILE. *BIG* MISTAKE.
BUT LIKE... IF I'M TOO GUTLESS TO *USE* IT, THEN IT'D ALL BE FOR *NOTHING*... RIGHT?
SO...SINCE IT *HURTS* SO GODDAMN MUCH TO *STAB* YOU...
...PUT SOME *HEART* INTO IT WHEN YOU SCREAM. OKAY, PAL?
WHAT THE HELL IS HE BABBLING ABOUT?
IS HE *REALLY* NUTS?
NAW... IF YOU BELIEVE *RIN'S* THEORY...
...*THIS* PART IS *NORMAL.*

STILL... IT'S ALWAYS NICE TO FEEL *WANTED*... KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
ANYWAY...
YOU'RE THE *REAL DEAL*, SHIRA.
NOW I *CAN'T* LEAVE YOU TO SOMEONE ELSE.



SHANGG

EEK!



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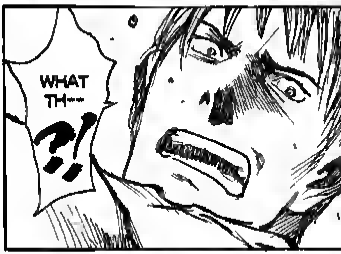
WHAT TH---
?!

RUNNG
FAAH!!

.....
.....?
WHA... WHAT THE HELL?
TO BE CONTINUED...!

LETTERS

send letters to:

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL, c/o DARK HORSE COMICS
10956 SE MAIN STREET, MILWAUKIE, OREGON 97222
www.darkhorse.com • blade@darkhorse.com • www.studioproteus.com

Last month we promised to announce the winners of the *Blade of the Immortal* sticker packs! So, without further ado, here are the winners!

Hi there

I've been reading *Blade of the Immortal* for the last three years and have ever since read every ish and tpb I could've got my hands on. As an artist myself I have utter respect for Samura's stunning pencilwork not to mennon the story that's probably the best in any current comic that I've read. Recently the storyline has gotten so-ooo good that I have been even looking up *Blade* sites on the internet to read ahead on the story. Patience may be a virtue but hey I'm not very vittuous anyway. This has made me realize just how much behind your English language publications of *Blade* are. I know about two words in Japanese so to really know what's going on I'm completely dependent on you publishing that one wonderful issue of *Blade* every month.

So please, I know this question has been asked a hundred times before but why can't you make the issues any bigger? Maybe another twenty pages? I mean you guys also publish *Manga Blast* and it's got about three times as much pages as *Blade*. Sure, it also costs twice as much as *Blade*, whopping eight and a half euros the last time I got one compared to 4.15 for a *Blade* at my local comic shop (at the moment that's Dublin's Forbidden Planet) but still I fork it our every month or so and I would definitely fork it out for *Blade* as well!

Anyway, not to sound like a complete whiner, I have to say it's a brilliant comic, which is exactly why I can't get enough of it! =) And the artwork is just amazing. Just reading it has influenced my own work tremendously. I never realized just how expressive hands and feet can be and Samura uses them to show emotion as much as facial expressions. Just bloody brilliant. And just like *Schindler's List* the black and-whiteness of it all lets him get away with all the gore. Hey you barely notice all the blood and guts. It's just gas that even my mum flicked through one of the books and noted how great it is that I'm reading something so arty instead of (in her opinion) "the much too violent" X-Men that I usually have.

So, keep up the good work guys.

Regards
Taija
via e-mail

Thanks, Taija! Hope you enjoy your stickers!

Dear Professor Ervin Gore

I like the *Blade of the Immortal* series so much because:

1) The artworks clearly rival any Italian Renaissance master's the world has ever known. Such powerful strokes, terrifying shadows, and fluid motions. I especially dig the flying cranes and over-sized bugs.

2) The storyline is not half bad. No, no, not at all. I'll go on the record and say that it's even better than your typical Raymond Chandler's. Yessir.

3) It doesn't feature characters with skin-tight, colorful spandex jumping from building to building.

There. Can I have my poster now?

Charleston Dean
via e-mail

No! But you do have some cool *Blade of the Immortal* stickers coming to you! That's all for the contest, guys. Be here next month!

— Tim EG and Mike C

ABOUT THE SWASTIKA

The main character in *Blade of the Immortal*, Manji, has taken the cruciform gammata as both his name and his personal symbol. This symbol is also known as the *swastika*, a name derived from the Sanskrit *svastika* (meaning "welfare" from *su* — "well" + *asti* — "he is"). As a symbol of prosperity and good fortune, the swastika was widely used throughout the ancient world (for example, appearing often on Mesopotamian coinage), including North and South America and has been used in Japan as a symbol of Buddhism since ancient times. To be precise, the symbol generally used by Japanese Buddhists is the *sauvastika*, which moves in a counter clockwise direction, and is called the manji in Japanese. The *sauvastika* generally stands for night, and often for magical practices. The *swastika*, whose arms point in a clockwise direction, is generally considered a solar symbol. It was this version (the *hakenkreuz*) that was perverted by the Nazis. It is important that readers understand that the swastika has ancient and honorable origins and it is those that apply to this story, which takes place in the 18th century (ca. 1782-3). *There is no anti-Semitic or pro-Nazi meaning behind the use of the symbol in this story. Those meanings did not exist until after 1910.*

ABOUT THE TRANSLATION

The Artwork. The author of *Blade of the Immortal* requested that we make an effort to avoid mirror imaging his artwork. Normally, all of our manga are first copied in a mirror image in order to facilitate the left-to-right reading of the pages. However Mr. Samura decided that he would rather see his pages reversed via the technique of cutting up the panels and repasting them in reverse order. While we feel that this often leads to problems in panel-to-panel continuity, we place primary importance on the wishes of the creator. Therefore most of *Blade of the Immortal* has been produced using the "cut and paste" technique. There are, of course, some sequences where it was impossible to do this, and mirror-imaged panels or pages were used instead.

The Sound Effects & Dialogue. Since some of Mr. Samura's sound effects are integral parts of the artwork, the decision was made to leave those in their original Japanese. When it was crucial to the understanding of the panel that the sound effect be in English, however, Mr. Samura chose to redraw the panel. We hope readers will view the unretouched sound effects as essential portions of Mr. Samura's extraordinary artwork. In addition, Mr. Samura's treatment of dialogue is quite different from that featured in average samurai manga and is considered to be one of the things that has made *Blade* such a huge hit in Japan. Mr. Samura has mixed a variety of linguistic styles in this fantasy story where some characters speak in the mannered style of old Japan, while others speak as if they were street corner punks from a bad area of modern-day Tokyo. The anachronistic slang used by some of the characters in the English translation reflects the unusual mix of speech patterns from the original Japanese text.

sirhc• 2003 08 11

NEXT ISSUE:

Next month:
Part three of "Fall Frost."

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL
74
$2.99 US
$4.99 CAN
FALL FROST 2 OF 6
MANGA
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OF THE IMMORTAL
DIRECT SALES

BLADE OF THE IMMORTAL

art and story by

HIROAKI SAMURA

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Immortal Scanner

Nice enough to distro the stuff

THE STORY SO FAR

- Series: Blade of the Immortal
- Date: 2003.08.11
- Volume: ???
- Chapter: 074
- Format: Left to Right
- pages: 00-32 (33 jpgs w/cover)
- Size: 8.92MB
- Source: Dark Horse Montly Issues (UPC 6156895340)
- Last Rls: Blade of the Immortal issue 073

Nothing much. but I left out a page. It was some crap about Dark Horse's other stuff. Not an ad just some company crap. This thing is already pretty big so I left it out.